

Printed for the War Cabinet. August 1941.

SECRET.

Copy No. 43

W.M. (41)

84th Conclusions.

TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

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WAR CABINET 84 (41).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Tuesday, August 19, 1941, at 11.30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).
The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.

The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. A. GREENWOOD, M.P., Minister without Portfolio.

The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. P. FRASER, M.P., Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD MOYNE, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. A. V. ALEXANDER, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.

Captain the Right Hon. H. D. MARGESSON, M.P., Secretary of State for War.

The Right Hon. ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.

The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.

The Hon. Sir ALEXANDER CADOGAN, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff.

General Sir JOHN DILL, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Air Chief Marshal Sir CHARLES F. A. PORTAL, Chief of the Air Staff.

Air Chief Marshal Sir WILFRID FREEMAN, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff.

Vice-Admiral Sir T. S. V. PHILLIPS, Vice-Chief of Naval Staff.

Lient.-General Sir H. R. POWNALL, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Secretariat.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General Sir HASTINGS ISMAY.
Mr. W. D. WILKINSON.
Mr. L. F. BURGIS.

WAR CABINET 84 (41).

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**Discussions
between the
Prime Minister
and President
Roosevelt.**

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (41) 82nd
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

1. *The Prime Minister gave the War Cabinet an account^f of his discussions with President Roosevelt and of his short visit to Iceland on the return journey.*

The President had been overjoyed at the meeting. The greatest cordiality had prevailed, and the Americans had missed no opportunity of identifying themselves with our cause. The American Naval Officers had not concealed their keenness to enter the war. While he (the Prime Minister) had had discussions with the President on political matters, Staff discussions had proceeded simultaneously. These had been most useful, and would be reported on on a later occasion.

The following were the main points dealt with in the Prime Minister's survey:—

**United States
help in Convoys.**

By the 1st September the American Navy would have a convoy system in full operation between their coasts and Iceland. This would afford great relief to our Naval vessels engaged on convoy duties. This procedure would present the enemy with a dilemma. Either he could attack the convoys, in which case his U-boats would be attacked by the American Naval forces; or he could refrain from attack, which would be tantamount to giving us victory in the Battle of the Atlantic.

**The Joint
Declaration.**

The Prime Minister explained how the idea of a Joint Declaration had come about, and how keen the President had been on its immediate publication. The President had been very pleased with the new paragraph dealing with social security, suggested by the War Cabinet, but had been somewhat reluctant to agree to the modifications in the fourth paragraph, which, in its original form, might have ruled out the continuance of Imperial Preference. He (the Prime Minister) had been most grateful to the War Cabinet for having met at 1.45 A.M. on the 12th August in order to furnish him with their comments without delay.

The Prime Minister drew attention to passages in the Declaration which were significant of the changed attitude as compared with that of 1917-18. Instead of saying that there would be no more war, we aimed at adequate precautions to prevent war happening again by effectively disarming our enemies. Again, instead of trying to ruin German trade, we now took the view that the world could not afford to see any large nation unprosperous. It was also important that the President should have agreed to a Declaration which in his (the President's) phrase referred to the "final destruction of Nazi tyranny."

**Supply
Questions.**

These had not been discussed in detail, but would be taken up by Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. Harriman. The broad picture was that American production at present was somewhat disappointing. American industry was working to supply their own forces, our forces, and now those of the Russians. There would have to be a review of United States programmes, and measures would have to be taken which would involve restrictions on civil consumption. This was not easy to enforce on a nation not at war.

**Operation
"Pilgrim."**

(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (41) 81st
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

The Far East.

Persia.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (41) 83rd
Conclusions,
Minute 4.)

The Prime Minister gave the War Cabinet information as to the President's reaction to the three matters referred to in the margin.

The discussion and Conclusions reached are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

+ a fuller record of this account is attached.

The Lord Privy Seal expressed the gratitude of the War Cabinet to the Prime Minister for all that he had done. His visit represented a great and notable achievement.

The Dominions.

Proposed
Meeting of
Dominion
Prime Ministers
and Visit of
Mr. Menzies.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (41) 82nd
Conclusions,
Minute 4.)

2. The War Cabinet had before them copies of the telegram despatched by the Lord Privy Seal to the Prime Minister on the 14th August, and of the Prime Minister's reply received on the 16th August. *✓*

In discussion, *Mr. Fraser* expressed doubts whether a meeting of Dominion Prime Ministers, if hurriedly called, would serve any very useful purpose, especially in the absence of Field-Marshal Smuts. He was convinced that no single Dominion Prime Minister could possibly represent all the Dominions in the War Cabinet, more especially now that each of the Dominions was a sovereign State. Further, the Prime Minister of one of the Dominions could not be a permanent or semi-permanent member of the War Cabinet, since he could not continue to exercise the functions of Prime Minister during a long absence from his own Dominion. Nevertheless, he would welcome any arrangements which might be made for closer co-operation between the Dominions. He suggested that consideration might be given to an arrangement for holding short meetings at stated intervals.

The Prime Minister said that, if the Prime Minister of any of the Dominions came to London, he would at once be invited to attend meetings of the War Cabinet regularly. If all four Dominion Prime Ministers found it possible to be in London at the same time, then, of course, there would be no difficulty in arranging a conference of Prime Ministers.

A different situation would, however, arise if four representatives of the Dominions, who were not, in effect, active Prime Ministers, were to come to London. To invite them to enter the War Cabinet would mean an addition to numbers which would present considerable difficulty, and could not be brought about without a recasting of the machinery of government. He did not see how Ministers in this position could be asked to attend meetings of the War Cabinet as a permanent arrangement.

In discussion, it was also pointed out that the inclusion of Field-Marshal Smuts in the War Cabinet in the last war had stood on a different footing. General Smuts (as he then was) had been appointed a member of the War Cabinet largely on the grounds of his high technical qualifications. He had not been appointed as a representative of the Union of South Africa, nor, indeed, had he at that time been Prime Minister of the Union.

The War Cabinet expressed general agreement with these views. Having regard to the uncertainty of the political situation in Australia, the Prime Minister was invited to send a telegram to Mr. Menzies explaining to him the position as outlined above. *✗*

**Naval, Military
and Air
Operations.**
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (41) 83rd
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

3. *The Chiefs of Staff* gave recent operational information.

The Chief of the Air Staff explained that the losses sustained by the bomber force in the recent heavy and sustained attacks on Germany (107 machines lost since the beginning of the month) had been partly due to treacherous weather. There was no doubt, however, that the enemy flak and searchlights had been strengthened.

+ Copy attached.
** Copy attached.*

The Prime Minister said that our attacks should not be pressed too hard if the weather was unfavourable. Consideration should also be given to attacking the less heavily defended centres.

The War Cabinet concurred in this view.

Mr. Fraser.

4. *Mr. Fraser* said that this was probably the last time on which he would attend a Meeting of the War Cabinet on his present visit. He wished to express his great appreciation of the privilege of attending Meetings of the War Cabinet and to thank most heartily all the Ministers and Chiefs of Staff for the help which they had given to him.

The Prime Minister, in reply, said that Mr. Fraser would take with him the warmest feelings of personal friendship from all Members of the War Cabinet. They had been greatly pleased to have him among them, and they had derived confidence from knowing that he had examined matters for himself and had been satisfied with what he had found. He hoped that Mr. Fraser would let the people of New Zealand know how much we valued not only the valiant aid of their troops, but also the moral support of their spontaneous sympathy.

*Great George Street, S.W. 1,
August 19, 1941.*

- MOST SECRET -

SECRETARY'S FILE, ONLY.

WAR CABINET 84 (41).

19th August, 1941, 11.30 a.m.

THE PRIME MINISTER gave some more general information about his visit to the United States President, over and above what is recorded in the Minutes.

The Prime Minister said that he had got on intimate terms with the President. Of the six meals they had had together, five had been on the President's ship. The President had shown great activity, considering his physical disabilities, and on one occasion had walked (every step causing him pain) a considerable distance in front of Marines drawn up on parade, notwithstanding that his own people had advised him against doing this.

The Prime Minister said that the family influence on the President was great. Both his sons were in uniform and clearly urged him that American assistance in money and materiel was not enough.

The Prime Minister gave his impression of the President's attitude towards the entry of the United States into the war. He was obviously determined that they should come in. On the other hand, the President had been extremely anxious about the Bill for further appropriations for Lease-Lend, which had only passed with a very narrow majority. Clearly he was skating on pretty thin ice in his relations with Congress, which, however, he did not regard as truly representative of the country. If, ^{he was to} ~~however~~ he put the issue of peace and war to Congress, they would debate it for three months. The President had said that he would wage war, but not declare it, and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could attack them ^{America first}.

Full agreement had now been reached on the scheme whereby the American Navy would have their convoy system in full operation between their country and Iceland by the 1st September. This would release no less than 52 British destroyers and corvettes now based on Halifax for convoy duty on other routes. Each of our North Atlantic convoys would be escorted by 5 U.S. destroyers, together with a capital ship or a cruiser. The President's orders to these escorts were to attack any U-boat which showed itself, even if it were 200 or 300 miles away from the convoy. Admiral Stark intended to carry out this order literally, and any Commander who sank a U-boat would have his action approved. Everything was to be done to force an "incident". This would put the enemy in the dilemma that either he could attack the convoys, in which case his U-boats would be attacked by American Naval forces, or, if he refrained from attack, this would be tantamount to giving us victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. It might suit us, in six or eight weeks' time, to provoke Hitler by taunting him with this difficult choice.

The Prime Minister said that he had thought it right to give the President a warning. He had told him that he would not answer for the consequences if Russia was compelled to sue for peace and, say, by the Spring of next year, hope died in Britain that the United States were coming into the war. The President had taken this very well, and had made it clear that he would look for an "incident" which would justify him in opening hostilities.

Dealing with supplies for Russia, the Prime Minister said that we might have to make some sacrifices, but this would be well worth while so long as the Russian front remained in being. When Lord Beaverbrook returned to this country he would have to go to Moscow. If the Foreign

Secretary also thought of going to Moscow to deal with the more general political issues, he was sure that nothing but good would come out of the visit. The technical aspects of supplies questions should, however, he thought, be handled by Lord Beaverbrook.

DB
Great George Street, S.W.1.

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EDB

Great George Street, S.W.1.

(i).

MOST IMMEDIATE.

From Lord Privy Seal.

ABBEY NO. 46.

1. Cabinet this morning considered question of an early meeting of four Dominion Prime Ministers in London in the following circumstances.

2. Mr. MacDonald telegraphed yesterday that Mr. Mackenzie King, who has now postponed his arrival in England until 21st August, had suggested that it might be possible to hold such a meeting at the end of August.

3. Mr. Menzies has announced publicly that provided he can secure concurrence of Labour Party in Australia he proposes, at the request of his Cabinet colleagues, to proceed to London at a very early date to deal with the major questions of Empire policy and strategy with particular reference apparently to the Far East.

4. Mr. Fraser had intended to return very shortly to New Zealand having regard to Far Eastern situation and to impending General Election there but has stated that if there is good prospect of arranging meeting with all four Prime Ministers he would be prepared to stay here a little longer notwithstanding the great inconvenience which this would cause him. He was emphatic that meeting should not exceed two or three days.

5. General Smuts arrived Cairo August 12th and is due to return to South Africa in a few days' time.

6. As two Dominion Prime Ministers have suggested Conference Cabinet felt that possibility must again be considered notwithstanding the practical difficulties.

7. View of Cabinet was that while time has not come for a full Conference to discuss especially post-war problems there is something to be said for a brief meeting for purposes of general consultation as to the war position with particular reference to Far East. Important effect on public opinion here and in Dominions of such a Meeting following on your return from meeting with President Roosevelt needs no emphasis.

8. Practical difficulty exists in the time factor. You are acquainted with local difficulties in South Africa which prevent General Smuts from being away from there for long. Mr. Menzies could not hope to arrive in England before end of August so that General Smuts' return to South Africa would in effect be delayed for at least three weeks.

9. Notwithstanding these difficulties the Cabinet thought that it would be right to put the matter before you and to obtain your views as to whether an approach should at once be made to General Smuts in Cairo whose position is clearly the determining factor. Cabinet favour an immediate telegram being despatched to him explaining the situation and asking whether he could see his way to attend such a meeting towards the end of the month without, however, putting undue pressure on him to attend against his better judgment.

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(ii).

IMMEDIATE.

TUDOR No. 36.

Prime Minister to Lord Privy Seal. Reference
ABBEY 46.

1. Menzies has only recently returned Australia, and I cannot think we should be justified in summoning him half round the world by air for only 3 or 4 days conference in a fortnight's time. He would no doubt like invitation to join War Cabinet but this raises many complications about other Dominions and size of the War Cabinet.

Although he is unhappy in Australia there is no other man of comparable eminence and knowledge there.

2. I doubt whether Smuts can be away from South Africa for so long, and also whether we should press him to dangers of flight through Mediterranean.

3. I hope to see Fraser before he leaves but I do not think he should be pressed to stay till end of month.

4. Is it not much better to let Mackenzie King come alone treating him with all the ceremony extended to Menzies and Fraser.

5. Delay in answer due to difficulty of breaking W/T silence with many U-boats about.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~SECRET//NOFORN//COMINT~~

Should you be able to pay us another visit as Prime Minister I hope that our Prime Minister will also be most welcome for as long as you are able to stay. Every Dominion Prime Minister will also be welcomed and will share our responsibilities in this way. It would not be possible for a Dominion Minister other than the Prime Minister to sit in the War Cabinet as this would weaken him in his own Dominion and would involve too large a permanent addition to our numbers, which would in turn entail far-reaching structural changes which are not in contemplation. The suggestions I have made there seems no chance that the other Dominions would agree to being represented in the War Cabinet by a Minister from a single Dominion. I hope you will take these points into consideration in making your plans. Kindest regards. Master General.